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Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council

Functioning of the resident coordinator system, including costs and benefits

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to the request made by the General Assembly in paragraph 93 of its resolution 62/208 that the Secretary-General submit a report on an annual basis on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including an analysis of its costs and benefits. This first report provides a broad overview of the resident coordinator system, its organization, modalities and functioning.

The report analyses how the intergovernmental mandate, based mainly on the triennial comprehensive policy reviews of the General Assembly and related resolutions of the Economic and Social Council on operational activities, is being implemented through inter-agency guidance and the evolution of systems, instruments and practices in the functioning of the resident coordinator system and the role of the resident coordinator. In line with the principle that the system, while managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is owned by the United Nations development system as a whole, the report pays particular attention to coherence and system-wide participation, as well as accountability mechanisms within the context of national ownership and leadership.

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** The delay in the submission of the present report was due to extensive consultations with various organizations.

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The resident coordinator system encompasses all the entities of the United Nations system that carry out operational activities for development in programme countries, regardless of their formal presence in country. Key elements of the system are: (a) at the country level, the United Nations country team, the resident coordinator and his or her office; (b) at the regional level, the regional director and regional manager teams; and (c) at the Headquarters level, the United Nations Development Group and UNDP as the manager of the system.

Significant progress has been made through various measures aimed at: improving programmatic and operational coherence at the country level; system-wide participation, in particular by non-resident agencies; and strengthening accountability. Benefits arising from coherence measures, particularly the use of the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as well as other instruments, such as joint programming tools, are described, while benefits from simplification and harmonization measures, such as common premises and services, are evidenced by some available quantitative indicators on savings and efficiencies.

The report provides information on the funding of the resident coordinator system, as a starting point on which to build up an appropriate analysis of the costs and benefits of country-level coordination in future reporting. The funding of the resident coordinator post needs to be understood as an investment for all United Nations coordination activities, including for United Nations security and, where relevant, for humanitarian response and post-conflict transition.

Despite important achievements and progress, there are continuing major challenges to achieving effectiveness and efficiency in operational activities for development through the regional coordinator system, including the need to: respond adequately to the various demands placed on the system, mobilize the expertise of the whole United Nations system to provide support to country development processes; and address divergences in business practices. Some recommendations are put forward to the Council with regard to future reporting on the resident coordinator system.

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I. Introduction

1. The resident coordinator system is a recurrent theme in the analysis of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system and has always been a key chapter in the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on this subject. In the most recent resolution on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (see General Assembly resolution 62/208), for the first time, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide an annual report to the Council on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including an analysis of its costs and benefits.

2. The present report has been prepared in response to that request. It provides the Council with a broad overview of the resident coordinator system, its organization, modalities and functioning. It addresses the benefits of coordination through the resident coordinator system, as well as its costs, and relevant policies set out in the resolutions on the triennial comprehensive policy review. The funding of the resident coordinator system is discussed as a starting point on which to build future reporting on an appropriate analysis of the costs and benefits of country-level coordination.

3. The report does not analyse in detail the recruitment and selection of resident coordinators, since a specific study on human resources issues has been requested by the General Assembly (see resolution 62/208, paras. 94 and 125). Although coordination activities with regard to humanitarian, security management and peacekeeping operations (in relevant country situations) are important mandates of the resident coordinator system, they are not extensively discussed in the present report. Future reports may, however, address these other themes in more depth. Similarly, the ongoing initiative to operationalize the "delivering as one" pilots in eight countries will not be covered as it will be the subject of a separate independent evaluation.

4. Since the present report will be issued on an annual basis, it can be seen as providing an overview of the resident coordinator system, to be followed by a series of complementary thematic assessments on selected topics. The report to be submitted in 2009 will place special emphasis on efforts to improve the selection and training of resident coordinators, as requested by the General Assembly (see resolution 62/208, para. 94). Aside from further analytical work on the costs and benefits of the resident coordinator system, future reports could address such issues as funding, programming, the United Nations system-wide contribution to the resident coordinator system, or coordination in situations of transition from relief to development.

II. Overview of the functioning of the resident coordinator system

A. Intergovernmental mandate and inter-agency guidance

5. The concept of the resident coordinator system originated in 1977 when the General Assembly established the concept of a single official — the resident

coordinator — to coordinate operational activities for development within the United Nations system (see resolution 32/197).

6. The concept, which has evolved over the years, plays an increasingly key role in the reform processes within the system. The importance of the resident coordinator system and its key role for the effective and efficient functioning of the United Nations system at the country level (see resolutions 59/250, para. 53 and 62/208, para. 91) has been consistently affirmed by Member States through the General Assembly's resolutions on the triennial comprehensive policy review. A call for an effectively functioning resident coordinator system is contained in each resolution on the triennial comprehensive policy review since 1992.[1] Guidance on the functioning of the resident coordinator system comes mainly from the Assembly's resolutions that emanate from the triennial comprehensive policy review and related resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council for implementation.

7. Efforts to strengthen the resident coordinator were emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report on renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform (see A/51/950, para. 49) measures since 1997 and also by the 2005 World Summit (see resolution 60/1, para. 169). The World Summit called for a strengthened role for the resident coordinator in the implementation of reforms at the country level, including appropriate authority, resources and accountability (see A/51/950, para. 49). In the two most recent resolutions on the triennial comprehensive policy review, Member States set out further measures to strengthen the resident coordinator system, including greater accountability towards host governments and the intergovernmental process as well as within the United Nations system.[2]

8. At the inter-agency level, the guidelines developed by the Administrative Committee for Coordination in 1999[3] have served as the key reference in defining the scope and basic parameters in the functioning of the resident coordinator system. The United Nations Development Group is building on those guidelines reflecting later guidance on the triennial comprehensive policy review and executive decisions by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the United Nations Development Group.

B. Resident coordinator system: basic principles and composition

9. In the context of national ownership and leadership of the development process, the resident coordinator system is the main mechanism to coordinate the

[1] See resolutions 47/199, 50/120, 53/192, 56/201, 59/201 and 62/208.

[2] See resolutions 59/250, paras. 53-61; and 62/208, paras. 89-94, 96, 101, 104 and 105.

[3] An initial set of guidelines, drawn up by the Administrative Committee for Coordination (whose functions have been taken over by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination), is contained in the document "Administrative Committee for Coordination statement on the role and functioning of the resident coordinator system" (1995). The guidelines were further elaborated and updated in the document "Administrative Committee for Coordination guidelines on the functioning of the resident coordinator system", which are available on the website of the United Nations Development Group and which are currently being updated.

United Nations system's operational activities for development, as well as emergency, recovery and transition in programme countries.

10. While the resident coordinator system is aimed at country-level coordination, the management of the system involves system-wide oversight and support mechanisms at the Headquarters and regional levels.

11. Two overarching principles underline the functioning of the resident coordinator system. The first principle relates to national ownership and leadership of the national development process. Operational activities of the United Nations system are carried out at the request and in accordance with the policies and priorities of Governments. National Governments have the primary responsibility for the coordination of all external assistance, including that received from the United Nations system. The resident coordinator system assists national Governments in achieving their national development plans and strategies and in carrying out their responsibility for the follow-up to major United Nations international conferences and summits by facilitating coherent, coordinated and efficient United Nations system support at the field level.

12. The second principle is that the resident coordinator system is owned by the United Nations development system as a whole and that its functioning should be participatory, collegial and accountable.

C. The resident coordinator

13. As reaffirmed by the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/208, the resident coordinator assumes a central role in making possible the coordination of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system at the country level. He or she ensures that those activities are in line with national development priorities, the mandates and objectives of the United Nations system organizations and the principles and policy guidance on operational activities for development. The resident coordinator is responsible for developing a multidisciplinary dimension in the assistance provided by the United Nations system to the country, resting on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The resident coordinator is also responsible for ensuring that national Governments have access to the full range of United Nations system expertise. He or she is expected to make arrangements for dealing with those organizations of the system without field representational offices, taking into account the special relationship between certain United Nations system agency structures and civil society. In close collaboration with the United Nations country team, the resident coordinator is expected to formulate an annual workplan of the team as a framework for concerted activities of the United Nations system at the country level. The resident coordinator is also expected to mobilize resources for the United Nations development system as a whole at the country level (see resolution 59/250, para. 61).

14. Under normal circumstances, the resident coordinator is the designated representative of the Secretary-General and leads the United Nations country team. The team is comprised of representatives of the United Nations funds and programmes, the specialized agencies and other United Nations entities accredited to a given country. All members of the team have a dual role, both as representatives of their respective organization and as members of the resident coordinator system,

and they are expected to provide their full support to the effective functioning of both. The Bretton Woods institutions actively participate in the work of the United Nations country team in most countries. The country coordinator of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), who has overall responsibility for such activities at the country level, operates within the resident coordinator system and is a full member of the United Nations country team.

15. The resident coordinator also normally coordinates international humanitarian assistance at the country level in support of government efforts. He or she may be designated as country humanitarian coordinator by the emergency relief coordinator in consultation with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on humanitarian affairs. If a Special Representative of the Secretary-General is appointed to an integrated peacekeeping mission, the resident/humanitarian coordinator may function as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General under the overall authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, with responsibility for the coordination of development and humanitarian assistance, including recovery. The resident coordinator is also normally appointed as the designated official for United Nations security, unless there is a more senior United Nations official resident in the country. In this capacity, he or she is accountable to the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, for the security of personnel employed by the United Nations system organizations and their dependants in the country. The designated official is responsible and accountable for ensuring that the goal of the United Nations security management system is met in the country.

16. The responsibilities of the resident coordinator, including as humanitarian coordinator and designated official, are contained in the job description for resident coordinator annexed to the Administrative Committee for Coordination guidelines of 1999.

17. The resident coordinator reports to the Secretary-General through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator as Chair of the United Nations Development Group. The delineation of the responsibilities of the resident coordinator as leader of the United Nations country team, on the one hand, and his or her role as UNDP representative, on the other, is being clarified in the update of the job description for resident coordinator. To make sure that the resident coordinator is more fully available for coordination functions and to avoid conflicts of interest, the General Assembly requested UNDP to appoint a country director to run its core activities, including its fund-raising, especially in countries with large country teams and complex coordination situations, or in situations of complex emergencies. As of May 2008, 49 country director posts have been established, and 41 have been filled.[4]

18. The resident coordinator, supported by the United Nations country team, is expected to report to national authorities on progress made against results agreed in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (see resolution 62/208, para. 96).

19. The responsibilities and tasks of the resident coordinator in leading the United Nations country team have increased considerably over time. The growing attention to system-wide coherence and coordination, the increasing complexity of issues and

[4] UNDP aims to establish 50 country director posts by 2010.

the multidisciplinary approach needed in many instances have led to an increased demand for an effective and efficient resident coordinator system.

D. Global and regional oversight and management of the resident coordinator system, support and accountability instruments

Policy and management

20. Various Headquarters-based inter-agency mechanisms provide guidance to the resident coordinator and the resident coordinator system on implementing the internationally agreed development goals and on achieving coherence, operational efficiency, and accountability under national ownership and leadership. In October 2007, the United Nations Development Group was brought into the framework of the structure of CEB. This move established a more systematic reporting link by UNDP as manager of the resident coordinator system to CEB and the Secretary-General. It also brought the resident coordinator system under a fuller system-wide ownership.

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the United Nations Development Group

21. CEB and its three pillars, the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management, and the United Nations Development Group, ensure a consistent system-wide approach to the work of the resident coordinator system. The United Nations Development Group is the mechanism that provides collective guidance to United Nations country teams on operational activities for development. The High-level Committee on Programmes focuses on United Nations system coherence on thematic policies, while the United Nations Development Group focuses on translating those policies into operational guidance and develops tools for United Nations country teams. The High-level Committee on Management covers management issues of relevance to the entire United Nations system, while the United Nations Development Group focuses on managerial and administrative aspects of country operations. The High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group work jointly as appropriate. CEB reports to the Economic and Social Council.

22. The United Nations Development Group Resident Coordinator Issues Group supports the management of the resident coordinator system. Within the updated framework for the management of the system,[5] ongoing initiatives of the Working Group include the establishment of an accountability framework for the resident coordinator system, with guidance on working relations (or code of conduct) and development of a dispute resolution mechanism; as well as enhancement of (a) the resident coordinator job description; (b) a resident coordinator/United Nations country team performance appraisal system; (c) the resident coordinator recruitment and selection system; and (d) the orientation and training for resident coordinators, covering its multiple functions.

[5] See "Principles for enhancing the leadership role of the resident coordinator for United Nations operational activities for development and accountability framework of the resident coordinator system".

23. The United Nations Development Group is providing increasing support to United Nations country teams through regional director/management teams. The teams have two core functions: (a) strategic guidance and support to programme development/implementation and quality assurance of the United Nations country teams' major United Nations Development Assistance Framework outcomes; and (b) performance management and oversight of resident coordinators/United Nations country teams. Membership in the teams comprises representatives of United Nations system funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other United Nations system agencies with country-level operational activities.

24. Support to all mechanisms of the United Nations Development Group is provided by its Office, which was recently renamed the Development Operations Coordination Office (with effect from June 2008). The Development Operations Coordination Office is the main support structure that provides continuing assistance to resident coordinators and the resident coordinator system.

The United Nations Development Programme as manager of the resident coordinator system

25. The management of the resident coordinator system remains anchored in UNDP, with management oversight the responsibility of the UNDP Administrator. The last two resolutions on the triennial comprehensive policy review reaffirmed the role of UNDP as the manager of the system. As chair of the United Nations Development Group, the UNDP Administrator reports to the Secretary-General, in his role as the chair of CEB, on the functioning of the resident coordinator system.

Substantive and advisory support to the resident coordinator system

26. The resident coordinator system draws on various types of substantive support from the United Nations development system. Several working groups and task teams of the United Nations Development Group provide advisory services and guidance on cross-cutting themes emanating from United Nations international conferences and system-wide approaches, as well as on programming processes. To underpin the support of the Organization to national capacity development a wide variety of support is provided, including, on common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes, capacity development, mainstreaming the Millennium Development Goals in poverty reduction strategy papers, Millennium Development Goal support plans, new aid modalities, civil society engagement, human rights-based approaches (including at work), gender equality and women's empowerment performance indicators, mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and responding to indigenous peoples' issues.

27. Thematic and functional electronic networks also support the United Nations country teams through discussion forums and exchanges of experiences, such as the coordination practice network and the Millennium Development Goal policy advisory network.

28. A programme of training is in place for United Nations country teams going through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process on, for example, results-based management. Other thematic training courses draw on the specific expertise of funds, programmes and agencies. They include a module on trade, with support from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and one on employment and decent work, with support from the International

Labour Organization. The Development Operations Coordination Office provides $3 million per annum from donor contributions to the United Nations System Staff College and to United Nations country teams to fund training.

Accountability framework

29. The resident coordinator system enhances the accountability of the United Nations system to the host Country through reporting by the resident coordinator to national authorities on the results of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (see resolution 62/208, para. 96) — in line with national ownership and leadership of programming processes and through the alignment of the Framework with national priorities. It also enhances the system's accountability to intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, for example, through the triennial comprehensive policy review and the present report.

30. Moreover, the resident coordinator system enhances accountability within the United Nations system. The building blocks of this accountability are: (a) the United Nations Development Assistance Framework results matrix; (b) the annual United Nations country team workplan; and (c) the performance appraisal system.

31. The United Nations country team workplan is the key instrument for organizing country coordination activities. The workplan is expected to identify key planned coordination actions, building mainly on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework results matrix. It is prepared in line with guidance from the triennial comprehensive policy review and related initiatives of CEB and the United Nations Development Group.

32. The results achieved by the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team are set out in an annual report. The resident coordinator submits the report to the Secretary-General (as Chair of CEB) through the UNDP Administrator. As requested by the triennial comprehensive policy review, resident coordinators will report to host Governments on the progress of the United Nations country team towards the United Nations Development Assistance Framework results.

33. In 2006, a performance appraisal system was introduced on a pilot basis for the mutual appraisal of the performance of the resident coordinator and the members of the United Nations country team against their agreed workplan. The system has been enhanced and is now being rolled out for the 2007 performance appraisal. The system comprises three broad components:

(a) The self-assessment by the resident coordinator and members of the United Nations country team of their own results (one set of results is assessed for the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator/designated official and another set for the team as a collective entity). In order to raise the accountability for individual members of the country team, reporting on results also shows how individual agency representatives led the team to produce a common result on its behalf. Results for the humanitarian response are based on the Emergency Relief Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator compact;

(b) The 180-degree competency assessment tool which measures team behaviours and competencies;

(c) United Nations system feedback on the performance the resident coordinator: the Emergency Relief Coordinator/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs provides feedback on the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator humanitarian function; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General; the Department for Safety and Security on the designated official function, in accordance with criteria drawn from the United Nations security management system; and CEB members provide feedback on the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator/designated official function, as relevant to agency mandates.

34. The appraisals are submitted to the regional director/manager teams which conduct their own appraisal and provide feedback to the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team. This review does not replace the internal review process within any one agency of its country representative, but rather serves as an input.

35. A number of challenges still need to be addressed to improve the system and process. These include: (a) the need to lighten the process while maintaining the quality of appraisal; (b) more systematic links between the resident coordinator/United Nations country team performance appraisal vis-à-vis the systems of individual organizations; (c) further developing the regional director/manager team appraisal, including enhancing system-wide participation while ensuring manageability; and (d) a more systematic follow-up to the appraisals to address performance gaps.

E. Country-level coordination mechanisms

United Nations country team

36. At the country level, the resident coordinator system functions mainly through the United Nations country team. Decision-making on collective actions or issues of system-wide concern takes place at the meetings of the team, led by the resident coordinator. Members of the country team include representatives of United Nations organizations who are duly accredited to the Government, have operational programmes, a country budget and accountability for team performance and United Nations country team goals.

37. In most countries, the Bretton Woods institutions actively participate in the work of the United Nations country team. Other organizations, such as regional development banks, may be invited by the resident coordinator to participate. In emergency situations, the vehicle for humanitarian coordination is the humanitarian country team, which comprises United Nations country team members, representatives of the International Organization for Migration, non-governmental organizations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Resident coordinator office

38. With the increasing demands and complexity of resident coordinator functions and the expectations of greater effectiveness, resident coordinators have been provided with support staff who comprise the resident coordinator office, constituting a minimum of one person, and an average of three persons. In complex,

post-crisis settings, the number of staff might increase with the inclusion of international and national professionals, such as monitoring and evaluation advisers, specialists in communications and security advisers, especially where support cannot be provided from existing country team capacities. The composition of a resident coordinator office varies depending on the country context.

Theme groups

39. United Nations country teams provide support to national coordination efforts under Government leadership, in which other major partners are present. Specific coordination tasks are organized by substantive area and are assigned to theme groups or working/cluster groups, or task forces, as needed, usually led by the agency with the relevant mandate and expertise.

40. The thematic groups are an important mechanism for undertaking the common country assessment or country analytic work, the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, implementation, and monitoring of joint initiatives. The groups are increasingly established in line with the outcome areas of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and cross-cutting themes. Common theme groups are HIV/AIDS and gender. Other groups might be organized on disaster management, food security, health, the Millennium Development Goals and aid coordination, among others. Groups are also often organized on operations, management and communications.

F. System-wide participation in the resident coordinator system

41. Participation by organizations of the United Nations development system in the resident coordinator system is premised by the principle that the system is owned by the United Nations development system as a whole and that its functioning is participatory, collegial and accountable. In paragraph 13 of its resolution 62/208, the General Assembly stressed that improvement of coordination and coherence at the country level should be undertaken in a manner that recognizes the respective mandates and roles and enhances the effective utilization of resources and the unique expertise of all United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies.

42. Coordination and participation by United Nations system organizations take place at the Headquarters, regional and country levels, with regard to the functions, organization and management of the resident coordinator system, as described above.

Participation in global oversight, guidance and management

43. There is wide participation by agencies in the formulation of operational policies and guidelines on resident coordinator system through the United Nations Development Group Resident Coordinator Issues Group. Participation in the group is open to all organizations belonging to the United Nations Development Group.

44. The participation of agencies with regard to the performance appraisal process as described above is managed through the regional director/manager team mechanism at the regional level and within the United Nations country team.

Participation in the selection of resident coordinators

45. United Nations agencies also participate in the resident coordinator selection process. They are encouraged to nominate qualified officers to be assessed for the candidate pool. They might also participate in identifying suitable candidates for such posts through the Inter-Agency Advisory Panel. Currently, 11 agencies with sufficient field operational responsibilities sit on the Panel.

46. While most resident coordinators have historically come from UNDP, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of regional coordinators that have come from other agencies, as a result of efforts by the United Nations Development Group to diversify the talent pool. Between 2001 and 2003, 36 per cent of candidates undergoing assessment as potential resident coordinators were from organizations other than UNDP. By 2008, this percentage had increased to 64 per cent. Between 2001 and April 2008, the number of non-UNDP resident coordinators approved by the Secretary-General and host Governments more than doubled, from 13 to 30 per cent. Staff from specialized agencies account for roughly 5 per cent of serving resident coordinators.

47. A number of factors affect the effort to broaden the base of recruitment of resident coordinators from various parts of the United Nations system. Those factors relate to the human resources policies within and across organizations, inter-agency mobility, the high costs involved in preparing staff for resident coordinator posts, problems of reintegration into the home organization after an assignment as resident coordinator, the low classification of resident coordinator and resident/humanitarian coordinator posts considering the complexity of the job, as well as the associated incentive package. Approaches to address those issues are being discussed in the Resident Coordinator Issues Group.

48. Steps are being undertaken to improve the training of resident/humanitarian coordinators to enhance their knowledge of other agencies (especially non-resident and specialized), including through briefings by all agencies to new resident coordinators. Nevertheless, a concern remains that resident coordinators are not sufficiently familiar with the roles and mandates of specialized and non-resident agencies.

Agency participation at the country level

49. The General Assembly has consistently called for improving system-wide participation of United Nations development organizations in country-level operational activities for development to optimize support to national development efforts and to facilitate the access of developing countries to the services available within the system. Accordingly, the Assembly has called for measures to promote greater inclusiveness and participation, including through promotion, decentralization, the delegation of authority and multi-year programming as well as the use of advanced information and communication technology (see resolutions 59/250, paras. 43-45 and 57; and 62/208, para. 95).

50. Coordination and agency participation take place in both programming and management aspects of the functioning of the United Nations country team. Participation may be influenced by a number of factors, such as whether or not the agency is physically present, with country operations and operational programmes;

the size and nature of that presence; the related budget; and resources that the agency can contribute to sustain coordination and joint efforts.

Participation of non-resident agencies

51. A recent analysis by the United Nations Development Group showed that, out of a group of 24 agencies, 13 were non-resident (50 per cent or more) in a majority of programme countries. Those agencies provided specialized support from regional and Headquarters offices.

52. The participation of non-resident agencies in the implementation of development cooperation becomes visible when they provide expertise and management services to field-level activities and contribute some funding. With increasing opportunities and demands for participation in sector-wide approaches and other new aid modalities, non-resident agencies are entering into institutionalized cooperation agreements with resident agencies (or have developed some form of country presence). Those agreements cover arrangements, such as the posting of a liaison officer in the country, and modalities of cooperation around global initiatives. Some non-resident agencies have multipartner initiatives, such as those with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (for example, UNCTAD on the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries).

53. Other non-resident agencies have national focal points (from Government host agencies or agency-employed project coordinators). Some agencies have taken concrete steps to decentralize their presence. Since 2004 the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has established 13 desks within UNDP. On the basis of a 2002 memorandum of understanding between UNDP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 40 Habitat Programme Managers are now currently in place. The International Fund for Agricultural Development has been opening operational coordination units in a number of countries under arrangements with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNDP as host organizations.

54. In those cases when they do not have country offices, ILO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have a bilateral strategic partnership with UNDP. This has allowed resident coordinators to be informed of the potential of the Education for All Global Action Plan as a framework for coordination in education. It also enabled the promotion of a toolkit on mainstreaming employment and decent work adopted by CEB in 2007. The regional commissions also signed a cooperation framework agreement with UNDP in 2007, identifying eight areas of collaboration, including analytical and planning exercises by United Nations country teams, and the coordination of advisory services at the country level.

55. In 2005, a United Nations Development Group working group on non-resident agencies took stock of the level of participation of such agencies in country-level development activities. The Working Group concluded that there needed to be a more consistent approach to ensure that all of the United Nations system's expertise is made available to national Governments at the country level. Some 15 entities that took part in the United Nations Development Group initiative have committed to pursue measures as part of a United Nations development system action plan on non-resident agencies. All have committed to designate focal points to liaise with

resident coordinator offices, and to be part of United Nations country teams when such expertise is deemed useful to national partners and when conditions allow them to do so. Staff in resident coordinator offices have also been designated as focal points to communicate with non-resident agencies. In 2007, UNDP created 14 national non-resident agency coordination analyst posts on a pilot basis, in response to the non-resident agency action plan, 12 of which have been filled. If the results are positive, the question of funding similar posts in other countries will need to be addressed.

III. Country-level coordination: activities, instruments and value added

A. Coordination for development

56. The benefits of coordination of the United Nations system's operational activities for development relate primarily to supporting the national development process by: (a) producing results to enhance the strategic impact of the United Nations system's contribution to national plans and priorities; and (b) improving the system's operational efficiency and reducing transaction costs for national partners, mainly through the simplification and harmonization of programming processes and business practices.

57. While the core function of the resident coordinator system in most countries is to coordinate development results, the system is also responsible for ensuring the security of the United Nations country presence in support of efforts to coordinate humanitarian preparedness for and response to emergencies and for ensuring a seamless transition from humanitarian relief to long-term development.

58. In order to bring the full potential of coordination to bear on national development efforts, the use of common instruments and tools has played an important role in United Nations country teams' efforts to improve country-level coherence. There are three major instruments in use: (a) the common country assessment; (b) the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and its results framework; and (c) joint programming and, where relevant, joint programmes. Other instruments developed to supplement them are the harmonized approach to cash transfer and multi-donor trust funds.[6]

59. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have been informed on a regular basis about the nature and performance of those tools since 1998. The Assembly, in the triennial comprehensive policy reviews in 2004 and 2007, recognized the value added of the common country assessment as a common instrument to analyse the national development situation and to identify key development issues, with particular attention to the Millennium Development Goals

[6] The harmonized approach to cash transfer is a new risk-management approach used by the four major United Nations funds and programme agencies for transferring cash to implementing partners in ways suited to country context and building these partners' capacity for high-quality financial management. Multi-donor trust fund are funding instruments through which donors pool resources to support national priorities and facilitate United Nations agencies to work and deliver in close coordination and collaboration. Multi-donor trust funds have been increasingly used in humanitarian, recovery and transition situations.

and other internationally agreed development goals. In its resolution 62/208, the General Assembly recalled the potential of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as the collective, coherent and integrated programming and monitoring framework for the operations of the United Nations development system at the country level, bringing increased opportunities for joint initiatives, including joint programming, and urged the United Nations development system to fully utilize such opportunities in the interest of enhancing aid efficiency and aid effectiveness.

60. Those tools have generated progress with the harmonization of programming cycles among those United Nations entities with multi-year programming cycles, in particular UNDP, UNFPA, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in over 110 countries (as of February 2007). This harmonization remains a challenge for the larger set of United Nations entities with separate governing bodies owing to variances in funding frameworks, cycles and modalities.[7] Full integration with national programming processes and systems is still a major challenge for the United Nations development system.

61. Qualitatively, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks are achieving a better alignment with national development priorities and planning processes and focusing on fewer, more strategic programme outcomes. However, monitoring and evaluation of results need to be strengthened. Moreover, there are still concerns regarding finding an appropriate approach to developing a United Nations Development Assistance Framework that is both strategically focused and inclusive. Some countries may have special needs that smaller or more specialized United Nations agencies may need to support and which may not be addressed jointly nor with large funding contributions. Such contributions are acknowledged and included in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (but not in the common results matrix).

62. Once the United Nations Development Assistance Framework has been completed and endorsed by the Government, the agencies further articulate how they will contribute to the Framework's outcomes. Progress is being made among UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP towards harmonizing the tools that operationalize the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (such as country programme documents, country programme action plans and annual workplans). Some specialized agencies have also evolved their own country programming frameworks or planning tools, such as the country cooperation strategy of WHO; the decent work country programmes of the International Labour Organization; the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance developed jointly by UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and UNDP; the national medium-term priority framework of FAO; and recently, the national education support strategy of UNESCO. It is important that those processes and frameworks are integrated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in order to reduce potential duplication and ensure complementarity. The World Bank and the United Nations country team, in many countries, consult closely to ensure complementarity between the country assistance strategy and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

[7] See A/62/73-E/2007/52, para. 105.

63. United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies are increasingly trying to harmonize agency programme and planning cycles and documentation requirements at the country level. A number of United Nations country teams have taken initiatives to develop more unified country-level processes and common documents, in particular among UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP.

64. Coordination initiatives intensify around a common agenda during the assessment and planning phases and in humanitarian crises, but tend to slow down during the implementation and monitoring phases. The continued existence of individual agency plans and operational documents may maintain unnecessary transaction costs for national partners, especially where several agencies are supporting the same partner to achieve a shared result. Further work at Headquarters and by United Nations country teams will help further harmonize and integrate agency programming while improving common implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

65. Joint programmes,[8] as one of the programming modalities to implement the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, are increasingly becoming the modality of operational coordination in certain areas where agencies need to work together. Joint programmes are sets of activities reflected in a common workplan with a budget implemented and funded by at least two United Nations entities, with clearly defined roles.

66. As of March 2008, the United Nations Development Group website contained information on some 428 joint programmes. While they address a considerable variety of themes, the most common themes are: HIV/AIDS; gender; health; poverty reduction; governance and democracy; and Millennium Development Goal measurement and reporting.

67. This type of collaboration may still be cumbersome and time-consuming due to unharmonized funding cycles and financial procedures, variations in cost recovery regimes, administrative rigidities, different delegation of authority or decentralization modalities and differing reporting requirements. Collaboration may take other forms, through harmonization and coordination of parallel programmes under a joint action framework or programme of work, which have also been proven effective.

68. An outstanding example of effective coordination is the United Nations system's response to the potential pandemic of avian and human influenza in 2005-2006. Under a consolidated action plan on avian and human influenza, the United Nations system, led by the United Nations system Influenza Coordinator, established clear coordination structures at all levels and a division of labour and leadership roles among United Nations agencies with the relevant mandates and comparative advantage, namely, FAO on livestock, WHO on health, UNICEF on communications, WFP on contingency planning, and overall joint coordination of partners and funding by UNDP and the World Bank. Clear priorities were defined to help countries put into place their national pandemic preparedness plans. As a result, within two years, 178 national preparedness plans were finalized. At the country level, the resident coordinator system served as a key mechanism that brought

[8] Joint programming refers to joint activities within the full cycle of programming (see resolution 59/250, para. 50).

together not only the United Nations system, but also a wide range of national and international development partners to work together.

69. UNAIDS provides another good example of a framework for coordinated response, with a clear division of labour among the co-sponsoring organizations. It operates under the principles of "three ones" (one national AIDS coordinating authority, one agreed AIDS action framework and one agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system). In general, United Nations country teams develop an organization-wide response through an integrated implementation support plan supporting the national coordinating authority in carrying out the national plan.

70. As another example, United Nations country team gender theme groups in many countries are developing joint programmes of work under a common framework of support, including working mechanisms for coordinated interface with national coordination structures.

71. In these three examples, the added value of the system is defined by its contribution to the development of holistic frameworks, its expertise and access to knowledge resources, and the convening role it offers (based on the normative and intergovernmental mandate). Given the enabling conditions at the Headquarters and regional levels, the resident coordinator system at the county level is able to function most effectively and coherently.

72. In general, greater coordination and joint efforts (such as annual planning, programmatic coordination, implementation agreements and monitoring and evaluation of programmes), offer several benefits, including:

(a) A collective voice in supporting the formulation, programming and development of public policies, especially in the context of sector-wide approaches;

(b) Increased potential for impact due to more strategically focused and programmatically coherent responses to national priorities;

(c) Increased interactions among United Nations organizations, leading to improved mutual understanding and cooperation;

(d) Optimization of financial, human and material resources;

(e) Increased efficiency by reducing transaction costs for the United Nations and its partners (for example, reduced duplication of activities and fewer meetings).

B. Simplification and harmonization of business practices

73. One way of increasing the benefits of coordination is the implementation of simplification and harmonization measures to reduce the transaction costs of the United Nations development system and its partners. This includes the introduction of measures for the rationalization of the country presence through common premises and co-location; implementation of the joint office model, where appropriate; common shared support services (including security, information technology, telecommunications, travel, banking, and administrative and financial procedures, including procurement) as well as common business units (see resolutions 59/250, para. 36; and 62/208, para. 120). In paragraph 118 of its resolution 62/208, the General Assembly also encouraged that transaction costs be

lowered further by jointly undertaking such activities as missions, analytical work and evaluations.

74. There has not been a systematic measurement and collection of information in terms of the benefits from common or shared premises and services. There are, however, some indications of benefits reported by United Nations country teams. For example, the establishment of a United Nations House in Romania has resulted in savings of $30,000 a month. In the Philippines, travel costs were reduced by 20 per cent by implementing a common arrangement with airlines. In Namibia, the sharing of information technology services resulted in savings of more than $80,000. Joint procurement and importation in Haiti generated savings of 30 per cent in transaction costs. The qualitative benefits of those arrangements include: negotiation of better and more transparent pricing structures with suppliers; increased buying power and time savings in procurement; and improved timeliness in human resources services/recruitment process with common rosters. In the case of United Nations agencies that have hosting arrangements with the Government, the cost-effectiveness as well as the impact on capacity-building within the host agency, need to be assessed vis-à-vis options for co-locating in common premises or United Nations Houses. In the light of security threats to the United Nations system, common premises are currently under review in the case of vulnerable situations.

75. In 2004, the United Nations Development Group conducted a study on the establishment of joint offices, with the first such office established in Cape Verde in 2006.[9] The key principles of a joint office model are: one common programme for the funds and programme; one empowered leader (the Resident Coordinator); one team (supporting a common programme); and shared/harmonized support services, to the extent feasible. Efforts in that direction are currently focused on the experiences of the programme pilot countries on "delivering as one".

IV. Funding of the resident coordinator system

A. Sources, allocation and uses

United Nations Development Programme core resources

76. As the organization that manages and funds the resident coordinator system, UNDP funds the basic coordination capacities of the United Nations. Between 2004 and 2007, total core resources in UNDP attributed to the resident coordinator function was on average $67.7 million, with minimal increments during 2004-2006. In 2007, based on expenditures, the amount rose to $74.1 million — an 11 per cent increase from 2006. On the basis of a workload survey conducted and elaborated upon in the budget submission of UNDP to its Executive Board, an average of about 26 per cent from 2004 to 2007 and 28 per cent in 2008 and 2009 of UNDP country office costs was or will be attributed to support of operational activities of the United Nations. These costs include the resident coordinator and his or her immediate support staff (secretary, driver), communications and finance, and general administrative services, as well as other support provided to resident and non-resident agencies. Since 2007, on a pilot basis, UNDP also includes dedicated

[9] The aim of the joint office model is to rationalize United Nations representation and operations in countries with a limited United Nations presence.

support to non-resident agencies through the 14 new national coordination analyst posts. The cost of the operational support provided by UNDP to the resident coordinator system over the past four years (2004-2007) is on average almost $400,000 per country (based on 136 countries).

77. In its decision 95/23, the UNDP Executive Board earmarked additional resources within the Programme's financial framework for programme support to the resident coordinator system. Those resources are referred to as "support to the resident coordinator funds" and serve as seed money to strengthen country-level coordination and allow resident coordinators to respond quickly to opportunities for system-wide collaboration in response to national priorities. The total amount allocated for the period 2006-2007 was on average $13.5 million per year. The actual amount allocated per country, which averages $98,700, varies from country to country, but those differences are small in relative terms.

Non-core resources

78. In addition to the core budget allocation, additional resources have been mobilized since 2001 by UNDP, through the United Nations Development Group Office, from bilateral donors, in support of country coordination capacity (75 per cent) and United Nations Development Group activities at the Headquarters and regional levels (25 per cent). Donor contributions channelled through a project entitled "United Nations country coordination fund" complement UNDP core resources for the resident coordinator system. The funds are used to support the capacity enhancement of United Nations country teams to function coherently, including through staff capacity, training, use of new tools and procedures, and improvement of communications and knowledge management. Through the United Nations country coordination fund, additional support has also been mobilized for coordination activities in countries in post-crisis transition as well as for "delivering as one" pilot countries (about $250,000 per country). The country coordination fund country level expenditures in 2007 were $6.82 million, an increase of about 22 per cent over 2006. Expenditures from the country coordination fund in 2006-2007 account for approximately 43 per cent of total non-core resources in support of the resident coordinator system. At the country level, the country coordination fund allocation varies from country to country, but on an average basis (2006-2007), the country coordination fund supplement per country (excluding for transition) was between $15,000 and $26,000.

79. For 2004-2007, non-core resources have, on average, accounted for around 14 per cent of total resources for support for the resident coordinator system, including for Headquarters.

Table
Resident coordinator system funding (expenditures)
(United States dollars)

Funding source	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*
A. UNDP (regular funds)				
UNDP operational support to the resident coordinator system,[a] including support to non-resident agencies	51 330	51 330	53 579	614 313[b]
Support to resident coordinator funds (allocated and monitored through the Development Group Office)	13 527	14 264	13 193	12 687
Total UNDP regular funds	**64 857**	**65 594**	**66 772**	**74 118**
(Percentage of total resident coordinator system funding)	(91.0)	(88.0)	(84.0)	(82.0)
B. UNDP/Development Group Office (funds raised from donors through the United Nations country coordination fund)				
Support through Headquarters/United Nations System Staff College (including "delivering as one" pilots)	5 300	6 961	7 191	9 445
Allocated to Resident Coordinator offices				
Support to United Nations country teams	—	—	2 063	3 498
Additional post-crisis to support United Nations country teams	1 225	2 119	3 531	3 325
Subtotal for United Nations country teams	**1 225**	**2 119**	**5 594**	**6 823**
(Percentage of donor funding)	(18.8)	(23.3)	(43.8)	(42.0)
Total donor contributions	**6 525**	**9 080**	**12 785**	**16 268**
(Percentage of total resident coordinator system funding)	(9.1)	(12.1)	(16.1)	(18.4)
Total resident coordinator system support	**71 382**	**74 674**	**79 557**	**90 386**
Average spending on a per country basis (excluding for transition and "delivering as one" pilots), based on 136 countries				
UNDP operational support to the resident coordinator system, including support to non-resident agencies	383.06	377.42	393.96	451.69

Funding source	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*
Support to resident coordinator funds and country coordination fund	99.46	104.88	112.18	119.01
Total	**482.52**	**482.30**	**506.14**	**570.71**

[a] This amount includes the aggregated cost of UNDP support to the "coordination" function at the country office level (including the resident coordinator salary portion and operational and administrative support costs) and represents about 26 per cent of the UNDP country office cost.

[b] For 2007, only estimated costs were available at the writing of the present report.

Funding of other coordination support functions

80. In addition to the above funds supported by UNDP and donors, each of the coordination mechanisms within the United Nations system, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Safety and Security, provide dedicated coordination support to the United Nations country team and the resident coordinator for humanitarian coordination and security, respectively. Where a resident coordinator also serves as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the funding of the resident coordinator function is shared between the United Nations and UNDP, with the United Nations reimbursing UNDP for 50 per cent of the salary and the allowances of the resident coordinator. The United Nations also provides funding for general administrative and security staff for the office of the resident coordinator as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

81. It is interesting to compare the costs of the resident coordinator system with those of the other United Nations coordination entities, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNAIDS, although the costs of the country-level coordination expenditures of those different entities may not be directly comparable owing to the diversity of their structures, functions and mandates. In 2006, the cost for the resident coordinator system was approximately $0.506 million (of which 40 per cent was for the salary of the resident coordinator and his or her immediate support), while the cost for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs/humanitarian coordination was on average $3.67 million per country, and for UNAIDS $0.328 million.

Country allocation and uses of support to resident coordinators funds and country coordination fund

82. The Development Group Office allocates resources from support to the resident coordinators and country coordination fund to resident coordinators. The activities that are supported fall into two major categories: (a) more integrated programming and advocacy; and (b) common premises and services. The bulk of the funds are used for coordination staff and key functions of the Office of the Resident Coordinator, such as the United Nations country team's strategic planning, monitoring and reporting on results and expenditures; and effective communication. In order to receive support to resident coordinators funds, activities must meet one of the following criteria: (a) clear linkage to better coordinated operational activities; and/or (b) innovativeness and a catalytic effect on joint United Nations system activities.

83. Examples of activities that qualify for support to the resident coordinators funding are: advocacy/campaigns and communications activities on the Millennium Development Goals; the development of monitoring and evaluation systems and poverty monitoring databases; improvements to country-level coordination, including through processes related to the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework; provision of support to thematic groups; collaboration on common services and premises; harmonization and simplification of business practices; and strengthening of the United Nations country team coordination capacity (for example, training and country team website development). Since coordination activities are staff intensive, the staff of the resident coordinator office accounts for a large part of support to resident coordinators use (75 per cent or more).

Cost-sharing contributions

84. There are indications that some United Nations country teams are able to mobilize significant amounts of donor/partner cost-sharing and United Nations system contributions to supplement support to resident coordinator/country coordinators fund resources. Further information on trends and specific arrangements in this regard are needed. From a review of a random sample of United Nations country teams, the United Nations system can contribute as much as 35 per cent of support for coordinated activities which are part of the United Nations country team workplan, and staff time. Donor contributions (including junior professional officers) can constitute 35 per cent or more. Still, the main burden of funding for the core capacities for coordination is so far borne by UNDP.

B. Funds allocation and reporting

85. The global allocation of the support to resident coordinators and country coordinators funds to resident coordinator offices is delegated to the Director of the Development Operations Coordination Office/Development Group Office, while the management of the funds is delegated to the resident coordinator in each country, with administrative support from UNDP. Resident coordinators submit their budget requests to the Development Group Office as part of the resident coordinator annual report. The annual report includes information on the utilization of the support to resident coordinators/country coordinators funds. The Development Group Office reviews those requests internally and, whenever feasible, involves regional director teams in the allocation of funds.

V. Issues and challenges

86. Much progress has been achieved and many innovations have emerged in the improvement of the functioning of the resident coordinator system. Still, much has yet to be done. The system still faces some old challenges, even as new ones are emerging. Some of the main challenges to the system include the need to:

(a) Respond adequately to the various demands for coordinated action from intergovernmental and inter-agency bodies as well as the United Nations system itself, which requires appropriate funding, including possibly through agency cost-sharing;

(b) Address divergences in business practices that prevent the United Nations system from working together in joint programmes;

(c) Develop a clearer basis and understanding for the division of labour and mutual accountability for results among United Nations development organizations, particularly in thematic areas where there is broad scope for mandate overlap;

(d) Find appropriate cost-effective means for engaging the expertise and knowledge resources of non-resident agencies and mobilizing resources, when needed, to support their more sustained and predictable engagement at the country level;

(e) Integrate more efficiently the work of various coordination entities at the country level, for instance in the areas of humanitarian assistance, security and HIV/AIDS areas;

(f) Secure a predictable, expanded and more equitable approach to providing system-wide support to coordination functions;

(g) Strive to ensure that the benefits of coordination and the resident coordinator system outweigh their cost;

(h) Harmonize further and integrate agency programming instruments, including implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

87. The need for integrated approaches, the recent triennial comprehensive policy reviews, and the pursuit of greater aid effectiveness have increased the demands for coordination through the resident coordinator system. This is reflected in the growth of theme groups, joint programming activities and expanded country coordination workplans.

88. Coordination should and is gradually reflecting a fuller alignment of the United Nations system's processes and programmatic priorities with those of the programme countries, as the United Nations system works within nationally led processes.

89. Overall, the resident coordinator system provides the platform for country-level coordination of United Nations development activities, bringing together all assets of the Organization to address national priorities. When necessary, it can mobilize the United Nations system to produce an enhanced response to emerging and critical issues (such as avian influenza), adopting cost-effective, facilitative coordination approaches.

90. Given insufficient data, it has been difficult to quantify overall the real costs of coordination (financial and non-financial). However, the potential benefits can be very substantial, both from the point of view of efficiency, but also, more importantly, in terms of strategic impact. Those benefits cannot be actualized without efforts to coordinate.

91. In order to leverage the impact of coordination, its value added as a means to achieve greater strategic coherence and impact must be clear. This value added is built on the strengths of the substantive capacities, normative mandates and, where appropriate, the impartial convening role of the United Nations system. In this

regard, United Nations country teams in particular should arrive at a common understanding and clarity on: (a) where and why coordination or joint efforts will yield high value added; and (b) what common objectives or results are to be achieved. Appropriate and cost-effective modalities of coordination/joint efforts can be developed accordingly.

92. The Council may wish to:

(a) **Provide guidance to the Secretary-General on core information regarding the resident coordinator system which it wishes to regularly assess through the annual report on this subject;**

(b) **Provide guidance on focused themes to be addressed in future reports on the functioning of the resident coordinator system (see para. 4 above);**

(c) **Encourage efforts to progressively introduce, where appropriate, quantitative indicators in the reporting of the United Nations country teams and the resident coordinators through the annual report, which would be linked to key results in the annual workplans of the resident coordinator system. The Council, however, might also take into consideration the difficulty in quantifying coordination results;**

(d) **Encourage an effort to seek the views of the programme countries and national partners about the effectiveness of coordination of the United Nations system's operational activities for development, as well as their involvement in those processes;**

(e) **Recommend that Secretariat's reports to the governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations, which are active in country-level coordination and have field offices, include quantifiable information on contributions to the resident coordinator system and measures on the decentralization and delegation of authority to the field.**